**Press Release**

**For immediate use: 30 November 2018**

**Call for Energy Minister to resign as figures reveal highest winter death rate among pensioners since the mid-1970s**

Britain’s biggest pensioner organisation, the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) has called on the Energy Minister, Claire Perry MP to resign following news that the scale of winter deaths among the country’s older population reached the highest figure since 1975/76.

The call comes as official figures out today show an estimated 50,100 excess winter deaths occurred in England and Wales between December 2017 and March 2018. This equates to 417 deaths a day or 17 deaths an hour. During the winter months of 2017 to 2018, the number of daily deaths exceeded the daily five-year average for all days except 25 March.

The figures also showed that excess winter mortality in 2017 to 2018 significantly increased from 2016 to 2017 in all English regions and Wales, and those affected the most were females and people aged 85 and over.

Jan Shortt (double t), NPC general secretary said: “Successive governments have simply ignored the problem of winter deaths among the older population and seem to have a policy of crossing their fingers and hoping things will improve. Today’s figures show that this policy simply doesn’t work – and things are now the worst they’ve been for over 40 years. It’s time someone took responsibility and that has to lie with the Energy Minister.

Today’s figures are proof that older people are at the mercy of poor housing, rising fuel costs, shrinking pensions and colder weather. Using the government’s official definition of fuel poverty, around 1.4 million older people in England are at risk. In addition, almost one in three older people live in homes with inadequate heating or insulation making their homes more difficult to heat or keep warm. In total, this accounts for around 3.5 million older people at risk or suffering from fuel poverty.

The key to tackling winter deaths is to make sure older people have got a well-insulated, warm home and the income needed to pay the fuel bills. This is a basic requirement of what a decent society should do. We need a new minister who has the drive to tackle this national scandal and someone who can find solutions to this problem such as rolling out a more effective programme to insulate homes, building more suitable properties for older people, raising the winter fuel allowance and tackling the excessive profits of the big six energy companies.”

**ENDS**